

VZCZCXRO2887
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHAR #1262 3341626
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 301626Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8552
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS ACCRA 001262

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958; N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KCRM](#) [GH](#)

SUBJECT: Military Personnel Accused of Human Rights Violations in Northern Ghana

REF: ACCRA 916

1. (SBU) Summary: A video and still photos were released to the Ghanaian media November 23 depicting military personnel in Bawku (Upper East Region) interrogating and abusing two naked civilian suspects. Earlier media reports stated that soldiers stripped the suspects and paraded them through the township on November 15 following their arrest. The Bawku chieftaincy conflict is between members of the rival Kusasi and Mamprusi ethnic groups, and tensions have been fueled by partisan differences. While the images have provoked public outrage, civil society leaders have condemned the alleged abuses and called for an investigation and appropriate sanctions. End Summary.

2. (SBU) The suspects were detained by military personnel for alleged involvement in sporadic shooting in the Natinga area in Bawku. According to press reports, the suspects possessed automatic weapons and ammunition. A sixty second video distributed to some local media websites November 23 depicts two naked, bleeding men. Photographs show a soldier kicking a suspect and placing the tip of his gun in a suspect's mouth. An employee of the National Peace Council (which has played a mediating role in the Bawku conflict) and security analyst told us November 25 that the Military High Command is questioning the Bawku unit commander and has launched an inquiry into the incident. The images have provoked a public outcry, including numerous phone calls into radio talk programs.

3. (SBU) The video and photographs followed allegations of abuse in the media during the past several weeks. On November 19, Chief of Defense Staff (CDS) Major General Peter Augustine Blay denied the abuse allegations, including earlier media reports that soldiers deliberately stripped the suspects naked. Prior to the disclosure of the images, the soldiers had claimed that in attempting to arrest the suspect, he struggled with them, which resulted in his clothes getting torn.

4. (SBU) Civil society leaders have condemned the incident and urged the military to thoroughly address the alleged abuses. On November 25 an Armed Forces spokesman made a statement regretting the soldiers' conduct, and assured the public that the video would be examined in conjunction with the investigation. He stated that anyone found guilty of abuse will be punished.

5. (SBU) The current violence in Bawku is part of a protracted chieftaincy dispute between the Kusasi and Mamprusi ethnic groups, based largely over scarce resources in one of Ghana's poorest regions. This conflict has also manifested itself among northern migrant communities in Accra, including the August violence that led to the death of three individuals at the Agbobloshie market (reftel). The conflict has defied efforts to find a solution, and the recurrent violence has claimed lives and property. Politicians from both the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP) have accused each other (with justification) of taking sides and fanning the conflict for electoral advantage. The majority of Kusasis are pro-NDC and vote en-block while most Mamprusis are pro-NPP. The Mamprusis' feeling of marginalization under the current government is also fueled by the complete lack of Mamprusi representation in senior government positions. [Note: For example, the District Chief Executive in Bawku, Deputy Regional

Minister, and Minister of Interior are all Kusasis, and the Attorney General is currently seeking to remove the (Mamprusi and NPP) Bawku Member of Parliament Adamu Daramani-Sakande from his seat. End Note].

16. (SBU) Comment: Ghana's military has been well regarded both for their performance as peace-keepers abroad and for their neutral and professional role in Ghana. This incident will undoubtedly weaken public confidence in the military as a defender of human rights. The incident also illustrates the civilian leadership's inability to effectively address the political and ethnic tensions that underpin the long-standing chieftancy conflict in Bawku. End Comment.